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ABSTRACT

Sociologists have long been interested in the area of status attainment but have begun only recently to specifically focus upon the status attainment of women. New approaches are needed for further research. A review of major occupational choice theories shows that they are constructed for primarily male populations and thus are inadequate in their handling of factors which may influence the occupational choices of women. There are more developmental stages for women, with a relatively greater complexity of factors operating within any given stage. Some of the more critical contingencies which affect the occupational choice and status attainment of women are marital plans, fertility plans, residential plans, mother's and father's education and occupation, family finances, presence of discriminatory laws or hiring guidelines, internal motivation, husband's occupational expectation, desire for a working career as opposed to being a housewife, perception of the kinds of jobs that are appropriate for women, the influence of parents and peers, and presence of male siblings. (Author/DE)

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WOMEN AND THE STATUS ATTAINMENT PROCESS:

A WORKING PAPER

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WOMEN AND THE STATUS ATTAINMENT PROCESS: A WORKING PAPER

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The Problem

Sociologists have long been interested in the area of occupations and social mobility and more recently have given much attention to the area of status attainment. One could thumb through almost any recent issue of a major sociological journal and encounter at least one or two articles dealing with these areas. While there has been a great deal of attention given to these topics, relatively little has been written with a specific focus on women. The central purpose of this paper is to illustrate the limited nature of much of the present literature and to suggest some of the elements which may need consideration in future research on women's status attainment.

Occupational Choice and Status Attainment

The two most common approaches to the study of occupational choice have been (1) adventitious and (2) developmental. The adventitious approach is characterized by a kind of choice factor in which the individual more or less "lucks into" an occupation without any real rational thought about it. Proponents of this approach include Miller and Form (1951); Caplow (1954); Sherlock and Cohen (1966). In contrast to this, the developmental approach is analogous to the maturation process. Ginzberg et al. (1951) theorized that an individual will pass through three stages: (1) fantasy, (2) tentative, and (3) realistic. The assumption is that over time an individual will consider many possible occupations from which one will be chosen. From

this perspective, occupational attainment is seen as a process that starts early in a child's life and that continues into the adult years. Occupational attainment is thus a product of prior influences as well as current circumstances. The importance of differential socialization of roles is contained within this framework. The manner in which the individual is socialized in the family and community setting determines, in large part, the individual's concept of desirable and acceptable roles and goals (Merton, 1957). Additionally, interaction in peer groups, the school and in work experiences are seen as contributing influences (Rodgers, 1966). Proponents of the developmental approach, in addition to Ginzberg, et al., include Blau, et al. (1956); Super (1957); and Rodgers (1966).

The developmental approach has been influential in the formulation of numerous research efforts in vocational psychology as well as in sociology, but it suffers from at least two deficiencies. First, it was originally formulated with the development of a male's occupational choice as a point of reference. Thus female peculiar aspects of the process have not been treated explicitly. Second, the developmental framework has as an underlying theme the concept of "increasing realism of choice." Unfortunately, this abstract and intuitively appealing conceptualization is operationally difficult to apply in research. If the transition from early fantasy orientation to later realistic ones result from increasing realism on the part of the individual, it is obvious that the researcher needs to have a definition of realism which is, at a minimum, in agreement with the usage of other researchers and which can be empirically determined. At present neither of these conditions has been satisfactorily met.

In recent years the sociological literature dealing with either

occupational choice or social mobility has been increasingly couched in terms of "status attainment." What this generally reflects is an attempt to broaden the framework within which these phenomena are investigated. Thus the move has, in part, been away from the study of only occupational choice toward a more dynamic analysis of additional statuses and the process in which these statuses were attained. There has also been a move away from societal-level processes toward individual-level processes; this is a critical point since the assumption in the first case is that "the mechanisms which operate to induce or restrict social mobility are characteristics of societies and not individuals" (Carter and Carter, 1972:18), whereas in the latter case the influence of individual characteristics is given much greater weight. Carter and Carter (1972) have given specific attention to this for social mobility and status attainment.

> Whereas sociologists were once concerned with the societal-level process by which a vector of origin social states was transformed into a vector of current social status, we are now concerned with the individual-level process by which a person's current social state is generated. Whereas sociologists were once content to merely describe the form of the societal-level process, we now feel compelled to describe in detail how the individual-level process operates through various intervening variables. Whereas sociologists were once concerned with the amount of intergenerational mobility observed, we are now concerned with the social mechanisms affecting the attainment of social status, irrespective of any mobility involved. (Carter and Carter, 1972:12)

In every case the intent has essentially been one of concentrating on what Carter and Carter have called "individual-level process." It is also pertinent to mention that the chief area for inquiry has been recast as intragenerational mobility rather than intergenerational mobility.

The etiology of this redirection is almost directly traceable to Duncan (1966), who treated father's occupation as an ascribed status which

became an "origin status" for the father's children. Having made this reconceptualization, the next step was then one of moving away from the traditional social mobility table toward analyses based on regression analysis. In particular, the movement was one of capitalizing on the much earlier work, in genetics, of Sewell Wright so that path analysis was introduced to sociology and an early application of the technique was the landmark study of the American occupational structure by Blau and Duncan (1967); Duncan, Featherman, and Duncan, 1968; Elder, 1968. This redirection has stimulated a burgeoning literature around status attainment with specific concern for causation (Heise, 1969; Schoenberg, 1972). In fact, the whole movement has been of such magnitude within sociology that Mullins (1974) has recently labelled the movement's researchers as the "new model army."

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin have evolved the "Wisconsin model" (Haller and Portes, 1973). This model depicts the presently accepted strategy of status attainment set forth primarily by Sewell and Haller (Sewell, Haller and Portes, 1969; Sewell, Haller, and Ohlendorf, 1970; Sewell and Hauser, 1972), and treats status attainment within a three-phase causal model. In this model relatively fixed contextual variables such as parental socio-economic status and intelligence exert influence on attainment of educational and occupational statuses which are mediated by such social psychological variables as academic performance, influence of significant others, educational aspirations and occupational aspirations. Phrased differently, researchers have noted moderate correlation between parental status and the later attained status of their children. Since it was unsatisfactory to maintain that parents could directly transfer their statuses to their children, the correlation could be explained by a set of intervening

variables. According to the status attainment approach, it is not simply that parent's statuses are transmitted to their children but rather the transmission occurs because they influence their offspring to achieve higher levels of academic performance in school and experience more influence from significant others, which in turn operate to develop higher levels of educational and occupational attitudes which then directly affect attainment. Thus, status attainment research represents the search for intervening influences between the success of parents and their offspring.

As had been the case with the developmental approach, status attainment modeling was originated for and applied to male populations. No conditions for the special circumstances of female attainment were considered; with the exception of the Carter study (1973), no one that we know of has attempted to apply this approach to female attainment. Thus, status attainment research suffers the same sex limitations as does the general developmental approach. In addition, there is a serious lack of pre-adolescent influences in the attainment process. From an empirical point of view, the generality of the specific Wisconsin model is problematic as a result of the lack of parallel data sets to replicate and extend the analysis.

Theories of and Contingencies on Women's Occupational Choices and Status Attainment

Since the developmental and status attainment perspectives have usually been oriented toward male development, it should prove useful to examine some conceptualizations which do afford insights into the special problems of women. As early as 1954, Caplow suggested certain unique characteristics of women's occupations and the way women perceive an occupation. Caplow pointed out that women's careers usually lacked continuity; that women tended

to be residentially immobile, especially if married; that in any "woman's occupation" many of the qualified workers were out of the labor market at any given moment; that women are confronted by special statutes, rules and regulations (in short, discriminatory laws, guidelines for hiring, etc.); and that married women who did work usually served as secondary rather than main breadwinners. Super (1957) suggested that whereas four career patterns were sufficient to categorize mens' careers, as many as seven patterns were necessary to categorize womens' careers; the main point emphasized by Super was the influence of the homemaker role which could cause a more erratic work history. Matthews and Tiedeman (1964) have specified four conflicts that a female may experience in her development that are not generally characteristic of the male population. First of all, the female's conception of male attitudes toward her achievements and intelligence may cause the marriage-minded female to forego a desirable career or to "exchange" it for the security of marriage. Second, disparity concerns sex typing of family roles that stipulate that women are qualified primarily as homemakers while men should hold the dominant position of breadwinner in the family. A third closely linked attitude involves the conflict between roles of mother and wife with that of being career minded. Fourth, women's attitudes toward desired age of marriage tend to conflict with the purpose and desire of college education. Thus from the Matthews-Tiedeman theorizing the female is socialized in such a manner that she develops conflicting attitudes of success--the success of the traditional wife-mother role versus the occupational-educational role. The resolution of this conflict and attitude is viewed as a focal point for the analysis of the career decisions of women.

Risch and Beymer (1967) have suggested an extension of the Parsons and

Bales (1955) concepts of instrumental and expressive roles to study the occupational choices of women. Their argument is that occupational choice is essentially "a function of the role an individual assumes" (Risch & Beymer, 1967:88). Thus for women, more often than not the primary role is an expressive one (i.e., chiefly concerned with "tension-management"). One way of conceptualizing this within socialization is that whereas men are socialized to be workers first and fathers second, women are socialized to be mothers first and workers second. Whereas boys fantasize themselves as cowboys, firemen, etc., girls fantasize themselves as mothers (doll-play, playing "house," etc.) or if in an occupation at all, it may be nurse, school teacher, or some other traditionally female (and expressive) occupation.

Taking his lead from Blau, et al. (1956), Psathas (1968) sees the utility of a developmental perspective which considers not only stages of development but the dynamics within each stage. Primacy is given to the relationship between sex role and occupational role as these are relevant within the developmental framework. While Psathas does not really provide a theory of womens' occupational choices, he does suggest certain contingencies which affect the occupational choice process for women. These contingencies include a woman's marital plans (both desired age and desired social status of marital partner), fertility aspirations (at what age and how many children desired), family finances, presence of brothers to whom deference may be shown in providing financial support for college education, parental SES (to include <u>both</u> mother's and father's education and occupation), and the general desire of a woman for a working career vis-a-vis a more "non-working" (i.e., out of the labor market, such as housewife) career.

Zytowski (1969) has organized a "theory of career development for women"

around a set of nine postulates. Zytowski recognizes that the developmental process for women may be different from that for men due to the intrusion of the homemaker role. While the "modal life role" is seen as homemaker, Zytowski also postulates that the woman's role is changing and may ultimately be little different from the role of the man; however, the developmental stages are depicted as greater in number with such things as childbearing, children in school, etc. Zytowski expands on the idea of vocational participation by delineating three components to such participation: (1) age of entry into the labor force; (2) span of participation as being entry with no interruptions (e.g., the "career woman") or a pattern of entering, dropping out, re-entering; (3) degree of participation as characterized by working in a predominantly woman's occupation versus a more male-dominated occupation. Finally, Zytowski argues that the preference for a vocational pattern is determined both by internal, motivational factors and external, situational and environmental factors.

In addition to the generally applicable developmental stages, Martin (1971) has discussed certain contingencies which relate specifically to the developmental stages and whether or not a woman is married. With reference to this dimension, Martin points out five possibilities: (1) the single girl; (2) married but working of necessity to supplant the husband's income; (3) married with children so that the career pattern is work, leaving work to raise children, and then returning to work when children are either grown or in school; (4) separated or divorced so that returning to work is done but not due to desire; (5) widowhood whereby work is returned to for the sake of having an activity. Other possibilities here could include: married without children thus allowing, with no interruptions, the pursuit

of a career; married without children but the husband does not want the wife to work; married, with children, but not letting the presence of children disturb--at least for any length of time--the career pattern.

Closely related to the female's problem of career contingencies is the tendency in American society to sex-type occupations. Tully, et al. (1974) have recently reviewed the literature on this dimension. As they point out, while women are 37 percent of the U.S. labor force, they comprise 75 percent of such occupations as book-keepers, cashiers, dressmakers, nurses, school teachers, librarians, secretaries, and telephone operators. This phenomenon is partially explained, according to Tully et al., with reference to the literature on sex roles. Men must exhibit (both as boys and as men) masculine behavior whereas women (both as girls and as women) must exhibit feminine behavior. With certain occupations sex-typed, males may feel compelled to obtain occupations defined as masculine, just as women may feel pressured to seek occupations defined as proper for females; or, women may seek marriage and motherhood since this is thought to constitute a major goal for them.

A concept seldom applied to the development of occupational and educational attitudes could prove useful here. Stefflre (1966) has suggested the value of the conceptualization of occupational "persona" as a useful device in analyzing such choices. By occupational persona, he means that the individual tends to select occupations that project a particular part of his self that an individual wishes to make public. Therefore, with respect to this dimension of sex typing, it might be useful to think of selection not only as protecting sex identity but also as a means of projecting self to others.

Not only do females have the special problems of attitude conflicts and sex-typing of occupations, there is also empirical evidence to indicate that women receive less encouragement from others to attain higher levels of education. It should be recalled from the status attainment approach that significant other influences were important intervening factors in the transmission of parental status to their children. Sewell's (1971) analysis found that while women make better grades in high school than do their male cohorts, they are still seriously disadvantaged relative to men in levels of teachers' and parents' encouragement and in their own levels of educational aspirations.

In addition, there is reason to expect that many of the behaviors of young females also may provide difficulties in attainment not experienced by males. Aside from the difficulties associated with early marriage and fertility, it could also be hypothesized that encouragement from husbands may have a negative influence on the wife's attainment. Not only do they have a strong male bias, but they also tend to ignore problems which in many ways are peculiar to women. In a rather axiomatic form we can detail some of the special problems that are unique to females and which may theoretically result in a developmental process different from males.

1. The female at the earliest stage of development is socialized primarily by another female, usually her mother, who may hold traditional views of what constitutes appropriate educational and occupational attainment.

2. Society tends to sex-type occupations in such a manner that pressures exist to express femininity in the choice of certain occupations which are restricted both in range and status as compared to the options

open to males.

3. During the adolescent years the female experiences a serious attitudinal conflict between notions of success defined in terms of educational and occupational attainment on one hand, and marriage and motherhood on the other.

4. Influence for attainment from others including parents, teachers, peers, husbands and possibly the husband's employer tend to encourage marriage-motherhood roles at the expense of further educational and occupational achievements.

A Developmental Typology of Women's Career Patterns and Work Options

The typology presented in Figure 1 illustrates the tremendous complexity of career patterns for women. Whereas one's marital status may be of somewhat minor importance for the career pattern for men, for womwn it is of almost inestimable importance. If a woman is married, then the societal values are such that work may or may not be undertaken; the same holds true for divorced and/or widowed women. The same is not true for men, who (as stated earlier) are socialized to work. Similarly, if children are expected, there is a certain latitude for women as to whether or not they also desire to work. And since the societal norm is for women to assume the more nurturant, expressive role, it is reasonable to expect many women--if they seek occupations at all--to seek occupations which are consonant with this role expectation. Even if many women who do marry do not have children, they still have a choice as to whether or not they work; and if they do work, there enters the question of the power relationship between husband and wife and how nearly equal their occupational statuses may be in order to sustain a viable marriage.

FIGURE 1

TYPOLOGY OF WOMEN'S CAREER PATTERNS

AND WORK OPTIONS*

Marital Status	Work Modes**			
	A	B	C	D
Single woman				
Married without children				
Married with children:				
a. Children are preschool				
b. Children are in school				
c. Children have left home				
Divorced with or without children-does remarry				
Divorced with or without children-does not remarry				
Widowed with or without children				

*Note: for another example of how this might be depicted, see Rand and Miller's typology of "life plans" (1972).

**Work modes: A - never works
B - works only before but never after marriage
C - works intermittently
D - works all during adult life

The critical importance of such things as marital plans and anticipated children will become more obvious when discussed with direct reference to status attainment. Its importance here has been by way of illustrating that there are contingencies for women's occupational choices which would not seem to be of equal importance for the occupational choices of men. Men do not have to consider an occupation and also consider whether or not they will get married or whether or not they will have children. Yes, men no doubt give some consideration to these things when they choose one occupation rather than another (e.g., being a professional mercenary versus being an accountant) but no, the framework within which an occupation is selected is not structured in quite the same way as a woman's.

Women's Occupational Choices and Status Attainment Models

It should be apparent from the previously cited literature that the developmental process for women is, indeed, different from that for men. There are both more stages for women and relatively greater complexity of factors operative within any given stage. In addition to the previous citations, others have also commented on the divergence between men's and women's career patterns (see for example: Diamond, 1971; Herr, 1970; Rand and Miller, 1972; Slocum, 1957; Smith, et al., 1963; Watley and Kaplan, 1971; and Yankelowitch, 1974.) As Osipow has explicitly stated:

> Few special explanations or concepts have been devised to deal with the special problems of the career development of women...special problems exist for them as opposed to men and... most of the masculine based tests and theories fail to really provide a useful vehicle for the understanding of the career development of women. (Osipow, 1968:247)

It might prove helpful here to provide a short summary of some of the more critical contingencies which may effect the occupational choice and

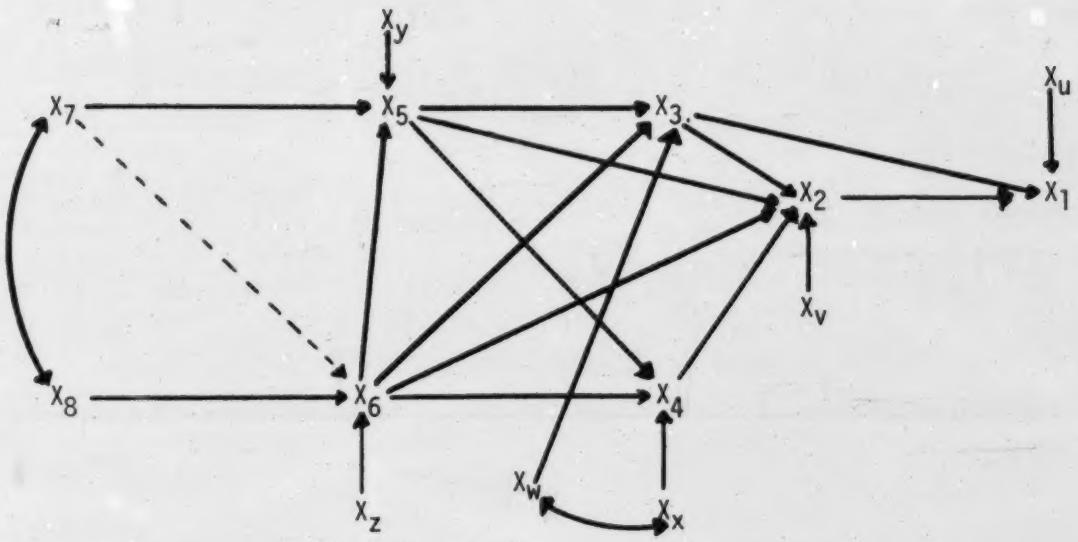
status attainment of a woman.

1. Marital plans - age of aspired marriage and status of intended spouse
2. Fertility plans - age at which children are desired and number desired
3. Residential plans - mobile or immobile
4. Mother's and father's education and occupation
5. Differential influence of parents as significant others
6. Family finances
7. Presence of male siblings
8. Projected occupational persona (traditional male or female)
9. Presence of discriminatory laws, rules, hiring guidelines, etc.
10. Peer significant others as either "modelers" or "definers"
11. Anticipated husband's occupational expectations for his spouse.
12. Internal motivation (satisfying instrumental or expressive needs)
13. Desire of a woman for a labor market, working career vis-a-vis a career as a housewife or a career of intermittent work
14. Perceived occupational structure (seeing all jobs as possibilities or a restrictive situs or range of jobs--especially seeing only "womens' occupations" as attainable, i.e., a sex-typed occupational structure).

When we consider current attainment modeling, and in particular the "Wisconsin model," it is apparent that few of the issues outlined above are adequately dealt with. If we were to recast the Wisconsin model for females, it is plausible that its complexity could become much greater. Although parsimony is theoretically desirable, researchers interested in the status attainment process for women seem doomed to be frustrated by the failure to consider sex-related limitations. It would appear reasonable, at a minimum, to reconceptualize the Wisconsin model for women. Before depicting a "new" model, however, Figure 2 illustrates the "general Wisconsin model."

FIGURE 2

THE WISCONSIN STATUS ATTAINMENT MODEL



X_1 - Occ Att

X_2 - Ed Att

X_3 - LOA

X_4 - LEA

X_5 - SOI

X_6 - Acad Perf

X_7 - SES

X_8 - Mental Abil

Source: Sewell, et al., 1970.

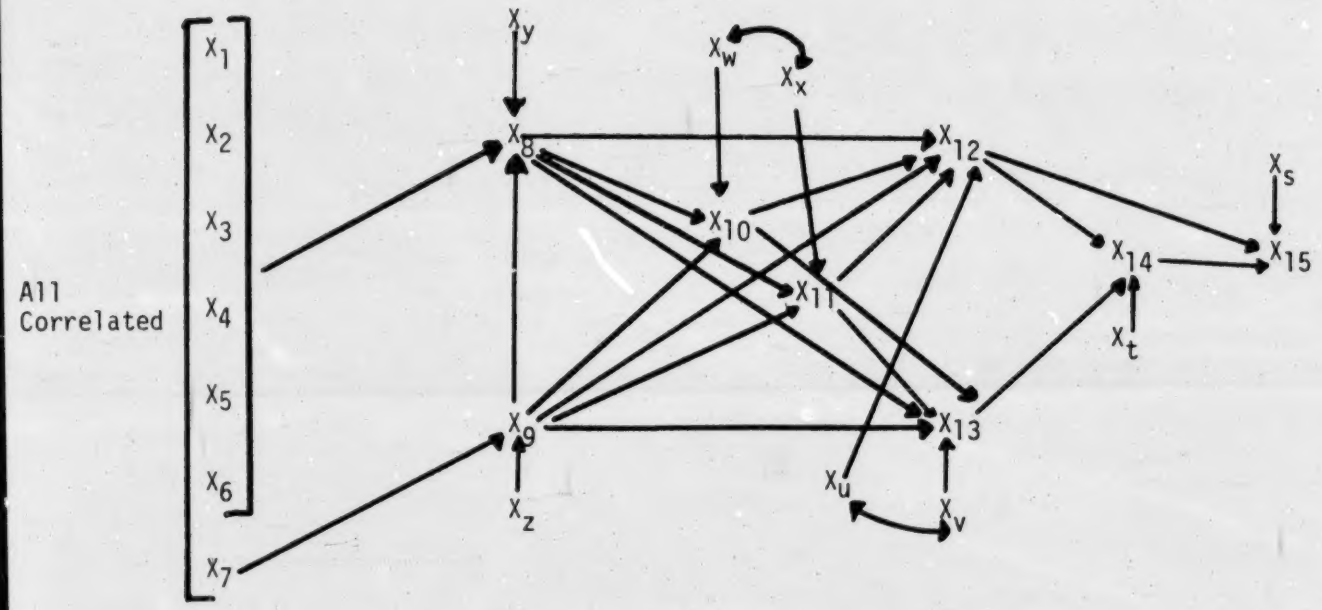
If we introduce certain of the dimensions discussed as contingencies on women's occupational choices and status attainment, a new model, such as depicted in Figure 3, is possible.

This model expands on the initially posited exogenous variables (X_1-X_7) and introduces as endogenous variables both X_{10} (marital plans) and X_{11} (fertility plans). The expansion of the Wisconsin model's SES to include both mother's and father's education and occupation requires only brief comment. Given the relative importance of mother and father as significant others during the socialization experience, it is highly plausible to expect differential influence and that what influence there is will be in part determined by mother's and father's educations and occupations. Thus a college educated housewife may exert a different effect on her daughter than a non-college educated, working secretary; a somewhat similar argument holds true for fathers who hold statuses which are hierarchically different. By specifying the educational and occupational statuses of both parents (rather than an aggregate measure) it should be possible to get a better estimate of their effects on the statuses attained by their offspring. The inclusion of family finances (X_5) and brothers in the family (X_6) is primarily a result of Psathas, who argued that both of these factors are important as influences on the occupational choices of women, especially since deference may be shown to the males in a family, for whom attaining a high status occupation is seen as more important than for females in the family.

The inclusion of marital plans and fertility plans may or may not be placed appropriately in the path diagram. It could be argued that since LOA and LEA are "aspired to" statuses, it would be reasonable to locate

FIGURE 3

STATUS ATTAINMENT MODEL FOR WOMEN



X_1 - Mother's Ed.

X_2 - Mother's Occ.

X_3 - Father's Ed.

X_4 - Father's Occ.

X_5 - Family Income

X_6 - Brothers in Fam.

X_7 - Mental Abil.

X_8 - SOI

X_9 - Acad. Perf.

X_{10} - Marital Plans

X_{11} - Fertility Plans

X_{12} - LOA

X_{13} - LEA

X_{14} - Ed. At.

X_{15} - Occ. At.

marital plans and fertility plans at the same point in the temporal ordering of variables; in this case, neither marital plans nor fertility plans would exert a causal influence on LOA and LEA but would merely be associated with them at one point in time. Two counter positions are plausible. First, X_{10} and X_{11} could occur after $X_{12}$and X_{13}. The rationale for this would be that X_{10} and X_{11} operate as intervening influences between status aspirations and actual status attainment. Second, X_{10} and X_{11} could occur as depicted in Figure 3 so that, rather than operating after X_{12} and X_{13}, they operate prior to X_{12} and X_{13}. In this case it would be posited that the overall effect of a woman's socialization experiences causes consideration of these key statuses for women such that they will be given consideration prior to the development of other status aspirations. It remains, of course, for empirical testing to help resolve the correct temporal arrangement of these variables.

CONCLUSION

We have tried to demonstrate two primary things in this paper. First, a review of the major occupational choice theories shows them to be constucted for primarily male populations and thus inadequate in their handling of factors which may influence the occupational choices of women. Second, an examination of the Wisconsin status attainment model reveals a similar lack of sensitivity to the potential contingencies within the status attainment process for women; of course this is not really unexpected or unnecessarily critical of the Wisconsin model since the model was developed on and for Wisconsin males and since the model has received only limited use with female populations. However, the limitations of present theory and status

attainment models pointed out in this paper should serve as a cautionary note for future status attainment researchers who wish to give specific attention to the status attainment process for women.

Conceptually, the introduction of marital plans and fertility plans offers an interesting opportunity for further research. Stemming from the early work of Haller and Miller (1963), educational and occupational aspirations have been conceptualized as "level of," thus yielding LEA and LOA. The assumption of this conceptualization is that these statuses may be conceived of as unidimensional. Kuvlesky and Bealer (1966) suggested a more bi-dimensional approach whereby LEA and LOA were conceptualized into two domains--aspirations and expectations. The empirical potential of both approaches is illustrated by their widespread use in the literature on status attainment and has recently received attention from Cosby et al. (1974). With this extant conceptual distinction in mind, it would be possible to conceptualize marital plans and fertility plans in a manner similar to educational and occupational aspirations. Following Haller and Miller, this would yield LMA (Level of Marital Aspirations) and LFA (Level of Fertility Aspirations). Using the Kuvlesky and Bealer conceptualization, this approach would yield marital aspirations and expectations and fertility aspirations and expectations. Empirical utilization of these two divergent conceptualizations should provide support for either the unidimensional or bi-dimensional approach.

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